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The Reactor

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What if Statue Had Survived?

Sometime in the early '40s, the Navy destroyed the great statue of Pacifica on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. The statue, towering eight stories high, crashed to the ground and smashed to pieces.

What if? What if the statue had survived? Here's what might have happened.

PACIFICA, Calif. January 22, 1987: (UPI) Ralph Stackpole's well-known statue of Pacifica, sculpted for the 1939 World's Fair at Treasure Island, was recently declared surplus by the Navy and offered to the highest bidder. The City of Pacifica bid \$1 for the 80-foot-high monolith. Since there were no other bids, the offer was accepted. The city was then faced with the task of removing the famous statue from Treasure Island to its new

home on a granite knoll overlooking Rockaway Beach.

It was determined that the statue could not be laid on its side but must be transported in a vertical position. A crate was built around the statue, then filled with hundreds of thousands of chopped up used Egg McMuffin containers donated by McDonald's customers. This was hailed by environmentalists as the first known re-use of these packaging materials.

Since it was determined that Bay Area freeways could not handle the statue, moving contractor Pete Pereira was called in. He promptly jacked up the statue and put it aboard a barge, which was then hauled by tugs out through the Golden Gate. The picture of the statue as it steamed under the Golden Gate Bridge made the front pages of the Washington Post and the Chicago Tribune. It was also on the front page of the New York Post, whose screaming headline, "Pacifica Goes Under", took up the rest of the page. Pravda put it on the back page with a headline I could not understand, since it was in Russian.

The statue arrived in two days at Princeton Harbor to the disappointment of marine historian Max O'Starr, who wanted to write the story of the barge on the rocks at Point San Pedro.

The statue was moved by Pereira's housemovers from Princeton, over the Cabrillo Highway through Moss Beach and Montara, over Devil's Slide and past Linda Mar Beach. The feat was cheered throughout the world as one of the greatest moving efforts in history. Pete Pereira stated to reporters that it was "All in a day's work."

The 80-foot crate now stands in the Pacifica Coast Lanes parking lot. It may be there a long time. It has turned out that the easy part was buying the statue, raising the funds to move it, and actually moving it to Pacifica from Treasure Island. This took only monumental skill and talent.

Before it can be uncrated and put in place near the bowling lanes, an Environmental Impact Report will be required. The Planning Commission will have to be consulted. The Coastal Commission has raised objections. And a new citizen of Pedro Point, a gentleman who bought a home there last week, has formed an organization, which he calls Friends of Granite Knolls. This group plans chili cookoffs to raise funds to fight the placement of the statue. Their objections: it will distract drivers. It will detract from the natural beauty of the granite knob.

Estimates on the completion of the court battle range from five to 15 years.